

Message Text

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ACTION ORM-02

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 IO-13 ISO-00 DHA-02 VO-03 SCA-01 CIAE-00

INSE-00 DODE-00 DEAE-00 PRS-01 INR-07 NSAE-00 AID-05

SS-15 NSC-05 SP-02 /064 W

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P R 020920Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9787

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

USMISSION GENEVA

USUN NEW YORK 816

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 13474

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF, RP

SUBJECT: INDOCHINESE REFUGEE BOAT CASES

REF: (A) KUALA LUMPUR 4966, (B) BANGKOK 24564,
(C) STATE 217215

1. WE ARE NOT AS SANGUINE AS EMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR THAT
"POLITICAL LEADERS IN REGION WILL BEGIN TO SQUIRM"
SHOULD FOREIGN PRESS AT OUR BEHEST ZERO IN ON UNWILLING-
NESS OF STATES IN REGION TO ACCEPT VIETNAMESE REFUGEES.
EVEN IF THERE IS SIGNIFICANT INTEREST IN SUCH STOREIES
IN U.S. OR EUROPE (WHICH MAY BE DOUBTFUL), WE QUESTION
WHETHER PRESS INTEREST WOULD SPUR LOCAL LEADERS TO ADOPT
ANY MORE ACCOMMODATING OR HUMANE POSTURE
VIS-A-VIS REFUGEES. IF U.S. ROLE IN PROMOTING
UNFAVORABLE PUBLICITY WERE TO BECOME KNOW, AS
IT PROBABLY WOULD, THIS WILL MERELY COMPLICATE OUR
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EFFORTS TO DEAL WITH GOVERNMENTS ON CURRENT REFUGEES

AND FUTURE BOAT CASES.

2. DESPITE ROMULO'S "MONSTROUS" STAND (GENEVA 6959), WHEN THE CRUNCH CAME (HUDSON CASE), GOP DID WHAT HAD TO BE DONE, ALBEIT RELUCTANTLY. WE APPRECIATE THAT SITUATION IS CONSIDERABLY DIFFERENT IN MUSLIM STATES AND SINGAPORE, ESPECIALLY WHEN MOST REFUGEES ARE CHRISTIANS, BUT PRESS CAMPAIGN DOES NOT SEEM A PRUDENT OR PRODUCTIVE WAY OF IMPROVING CURRENT HITUATION HERE.

3. WHILE THERE MAY BE SOME MERIT IN BANGKOK'S SUGGESTION (REFTEL B) THAT ISSUE BE ADDRESSED IN SECRETARY'S UNGA SPEECH, WE THINK THIS COULD TEND TO DETRACT FROM OUR EFFORT TO "INTERNATIONALIZE" REFUGEE PROBLEM AND FOCUS ON U.S. AS CAUSE OF PROBLEM, SOLE SOURCE OF ASSISTANCE, PLACE OF REFUGEE, ETC. THUS, WE VERY MUCH LEAN TOWARD APPEAL TO AND FROM WALDHEIM (REFTEL C) AND VISIT TO AREA FROM UNHCR, WHO IF HE DOES NOTHING ELSE, WILL LEARN THAT REFUGEES AREN'T SIMPLY ETHNIC CHINESE. AS FAR AS GOP CONCERNED, PAPAL APPEAL MIGHT ALSO BE USEFUL.

4. VIEWED FROM MANILA, BASIC PROBLEM WE FACE IN COPING WITH VIETNAMESE BOAT REFUGGES IS THAT STATES OF THE REGION (AND INDEED MUCH OF THE WORLD) CONSIDER VIETNAM AN ESSENTIALLY U.S. PROBLEM. REFUGEES ARE SEEN AS SIMPLY ONE TRAGIC ASPECT OF PROBLEM WHICH HAS COME HOME TO U.S. TO ROOST, AND THEY BELIEVE IT IS UP TO U.S. TO DEAL WITH IT. WE CAN APPEAL TO SENSE OF DECENCY, HUMANITY, UNTIL WE ARE BLUE IN THE FACE. BUT UNLESS WE CAN ASSURE FIRST RECEIVING STATES THAT THERE IS SOME MECHANISM WHICH WILL ENSURE THAT THEY WILL BE BURNDENED WITH THESE REFUGEES FOR A RELATIVELY SHORT PERIOD AND NOT INDEFINITELY, APPEAL WILL BE FRUITLESS. IDEALLY THIS MECHANISM SHOULD BE IMPROVED UNHCR RESETTLEMENT EFFORT. MORE REALISTICALLY, IT MAY HAVE TO BE EXPANDED AND EXTENDED EPP.
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